

# Malay Traditional Jewellery: The Innovation of *Pending* as Contemporary Fashion Accessories in Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Pending is part of traditional jewellery, often used to complement Malay clothing. Aristocratic people usually wear this pending on the waist on special occasions and gatherings, such as weddings and cultural events. Since Pending is no longer as popular as it once was, this study suggests improving and innovating existing functions. New mechanisms have shown viable replacements for traditional features. This study aims to resurrect the Pending into a modern multi-function buckle as a contemporary fashion accessory in Malaysia. Qualitative research involving observation and description analysis is applied using a formal analysis approach. This research helps to preserve Malaysia's culture and become a reference point for academics, designers, goldsmiths, historians, and other related professions in art, culture, and heritage of traditional jewellery.

**Keywords**— Malay Traditional Jewellery, Pending, Innovation, Contemporary, Fashion Accessories.

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has a rich cultural heritage, and one of the most beautiful aspects of its culture is its traditional jewellery. Among the various types of traditional jewellery in Malaysia, pending stands out as a unique and innovative accessory that has gained popularity as a fashion statement. Pending is a type of jewellery that replaces the head of the belt worn with traditional clothing by Malay men and women (Zubaidah Sual, 2022). Interestingly various collections pending from the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur, were discovered.

This accessory has a fascinating history and has evolved into an innovative and stylish addition. In this journal article, we will explore the evolution of *pending* as a fashion accessory in Malaysia, exploring its history and significance in the Malay community. With intricate designs and rich history, pending has become a symbol of tradition and elegance in Malaysia. This article aims to comprehensively understand the innovation of pending as a fashion accessory in Malaysia and its significance in Malaysia's cultural heritage.

Malaysia is rich in customs and traditions such as wedding ceremonies, which have *dokoh*, head ornament (*cucuk sanggul*), bracelets, leg ornaments, and waist ornaments (Pending) are often used by men and women as a complement to clothing. According to Esa S.R., Aziz A.A., Mahamood M. (2018), many generations today are unaware of the functions and applications of this traditional Malay jewellery. Aside from that, the younger generation prefers minimalist and trendy belt buckles. Ismail Ali (2019) also mentions people increasingly prefer to wear caps rather than *Tanjak* or headgear and choose to wear belts with a variety of buckles rather than the Pending. Thus, the researchers took the opportunity to study maintaining the characteristics of traditional jewellery (*Pending*) as a heritage to adapt into the fashion accessories design

with modern concepts and create awareness about traditional jewellery from being forgotten.

Therefore, examining the selected illustrations shows the pending design production process in a modern context with various functions. These details will be elaborated further in the findings and aligned with previous research to establish a clear analytical framework and approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional jewellery is closely related to fashion accessory design, which requires knowledge of past, present, and future fashion trends. According to DeMello (2007), humans wear jewellery to enhance their appearance and pending is classified as a type of body jewellery. In ancient times, pending was used daily as a clothing complement, with pending serving as a belt or fastener to tighten the *kain sarung* or *sampin* (Siti Zainon, 2009; Zubaidah Sual, 2022).

In the Malay community, *pending* is not only a part of being a clothing accessory. *Pending* was made for protection against evil spirits and stabbing. (Putri Eliza, 2021). Moreover, Zawawi et al. (2019) state that a gold belt buckle is considered a status symbol among Southeast Asians. It is one of the tools of royal majesty, making it a highly valued cultural ornament among the Malay community (Zubaidah Sual, 2022).

According to Hayati Mohamad Zawawi, Sabzali Musa Kahn, Raja Suriaty Raja Ahmed (2019), Kassim (1988,1997), Yusof (1984) and Siti Raudhah (2016), in socio-cultural pending also serves as a status symbol and a symbol of the Malay community, especially the sultan and the royal family. Effendy (2005) and Putri Eliza (2021) explained that the symbolic meaning of wearing pending as an amulet is to protect the body and spirit. According to Azah Aziz (2006) and Siti Zainon Ismail (2009), this jewellery is traditionally worn on the waist (refer to Fig. 1). The belly button is believed to be the weakest part of the body. It can be targeted for stabbing or subjected to magical influences such as the *tuju* type. Additionally, it is believed to be a place where subtle beings may enter.

Fig. 1 Way of use pending.



Source: <https://www.beritaharian.sg/setempat/anak-muda-giat-hidupkan-minat-terhadap-busana-melayu>

## The Innovation of Jewellery Design

This research approach provides valuable insights and opportunities for conversation about the future of jewellery design. The selected cases show that it is possible to produce things with new meanings by moving technologies away from their usual and expected roles (Thayane T., 2020). These innovative meanings may allow the discussion of societies' contemporary issues. For instance, these cases indicate how design can benefit from technology to adopt a speculative position (Dunne and Raby, 2013) and thus encourage society to discuss ideas that shape the world.

A technological and humanised culture in jewellery design emerges from this. The selected case also reveals

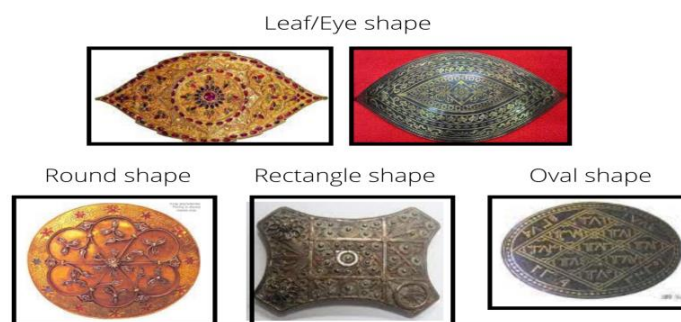
the shift towards the multi-function of traditional jewellery (Thayane T., 2020). For example, Malay traditional pendants are ornaments worn at certain times, such as public gatherings, weddings, and an instrument of majesty in the Malay Monarch. This initiative will familiarise the younger generation with pending jewellery and its uses. In the 20th century, fashion accessories played a significant role in enhancing a person's appearance. These accessories come in different sizes, shapes, colours, etc. According to Nicole Phelps (2019), fashion accessories are divided into jewellery, shoes, handbags, gloves, and belts.

### The Characteristics of Pending

*Pending* is a jewellery form worn on a waist made from precious materials such as gold, silver, copper, and rose gold. The original pending is from fabric bends or folds in the shape of a belt. In ancient times, *pending* was used as a belt head or *bengkung* in the categories of body jewellery (Kassim Mohd Ali, 2008).

The shape is a central element in a jewellery design. In the old days, Malay artisans made natural resources such as leaves and the shape of the eye as inspiration to produce designs *Pending* as symbolic of the shield tummies. The form of *Pending* comes in a variety, such as organic and geometric. In Malay word, it is called *Bujur lancip*. The other shapes are oval, round, and rectangular (Fig. 2).

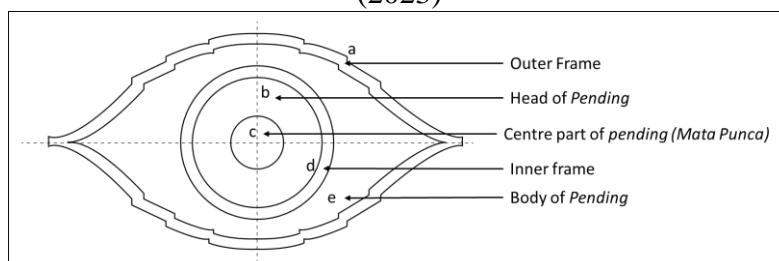
Fig. 2 Pending in various shapes.



Sources: Collection from Textile Museum Kuala Lumpur.

Malay traditional jewellery (*Pending*) has five essential parts: the inner frame, the outer frame, the head of the *pending*, the body part, and the centre point (Fig. 3). Traditional Malay artisans are highly artistic and skilled, persevering with strength and inspiration to turn traditional design elements into distinctive and aesthetically beautiful creations.

Fig. 3 Design features essential to the *Pending*'s overall structure, developed by Nazirah Mohamad Ba'ai (2023)



Sources: National Museum Textile, Kuala Lumpur

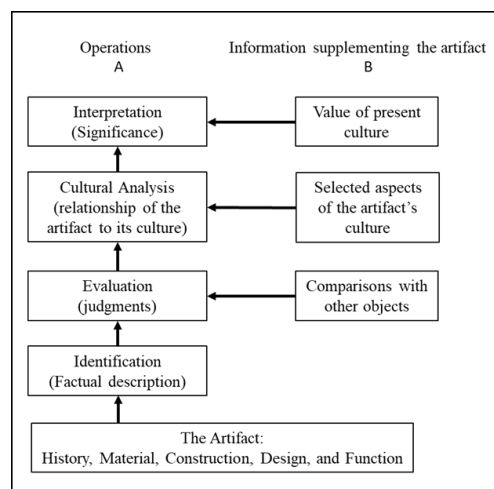
The characteristics of pending include its multifunctional diversity and intricate designs. Pending is created by combining aesthetics and functionality, and it can be adjusted or varied to fit human demands and desires due to the attire and styling. Its designs are often intricate and feature traditional Malay motifs, such as the *bunga melur* and *bunga tanjung* (Zubaidah Sual, 2022). Thus, this clearly shows that pending is a unique

and significant traditional Malay jewellery with various functions and characteristics in the Malay context. Its multifunctional diversity and intricate designs make it a valuable cultural ornament among the Malay community.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is qualitative method. An object-based research method is applied to observe, describe, and analyse the *pending* using a model of artefact study by Fleming, E.M. 1974 (Fig. 4). This paper discusses the formal analysis method for defining and rating traditional Malay jewellery’s visual and material appearance of *pending*. Most of the data was acquired through observation and visits to the National Museum of Kuala Lumpur, the older generation who has experienced jewellery artefacts, and the specialists in the area, such as costume traditional and contemporary costumes collectors and entrepreneurs.

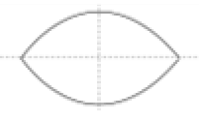
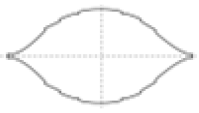
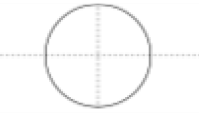
Fig. 4 Model of artefact study by Fleming, E.M. 1974

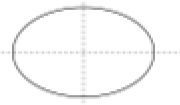
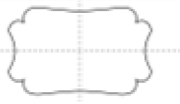


## Data Collection

The illustrated data of 23 designs of the pending products was gathered from the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur. The design motif of the product was from varied types of *pending* and belt chains (refer to Table 3.1). This method seeks to analyse visual form using visual data.

Table I. The types of pending forms and shapes, by Nazirah Mohamad Ba'ai (2023)

Type of Pending	Form Shape	Descriptions
<i>Bujur lancip</i>		This shape resembles the human eyeball, referred to as a suspended gem because of its tapered oval shape, meaning it is pointed or tapered at both ends.
<i>Bujur berhujung pepat</i>		This shape has a flat and equal corner or tip without any sharp or tapered effect on the end.
Cycle		A cycle shape is a circular or oval shape often used to represent or evoke a sense of continuity, repetition, or movement. Additionally, cycle shapes can emphasise or draw attention to a particular element within a design or create a focal point

Oval		
Long rectangle		The long rectangle shape creates a sense of proportion, balance, and harmony in the overall design.

The researcher determined through observation and document analysis that the *pending* collection is comprised of two primary forms such as geometric and organic. The three identified geometric shapes are round, long rectangles, and pointed ovals (Siti Zainon, 2009; Siti Raudhah et al., 2016). At the same time, the *pending* organic design can be identified through the pointed oval shape at the end. In the context of design elements, the *pending* geometric shape's size is smaller than the pending organic shape, where the length is more extensive, it is because this is intended as an attraction to the wearer. In addition, this type of *pending* also has a complete pattern design and a more loaded variety of decorations, motifs, and gemstones.

### The Jewellery Design Process

Design is one of the essential components of manufacturing jewellery. Developing innovative design processes, techniques, strategies, and procedures in jewellery design is significantly more critical for meeting the end user's needs. In this phase, designers and jewellers should focus on customer needs and current trends (Hashim HZ, 2020).

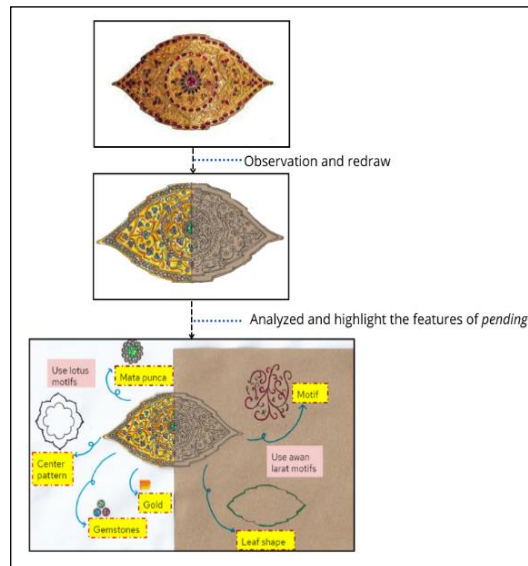
This phase of the process is related to determining the suitability of the design idea to produce a jewellery design. The jewellery design process involves several stages, from ideation to the final production of a piece of jewellery (refer to Fig. 5). According to Elizabeth Galton (2012), the design process of jewellery includes five main stages: ideation, sketching, rendering, 3D modelling, and prototyping. The following are some further explanations of the design process.

- The first stage of the jewellery design process is ideation, where designers generate ideas and conceptualise their designs by brainstorming and researching for inspiration.
- The second stage is sketching, where designers create rough sketches of their thoughts on paper or using a digital platform.
- The third stage is rendering, which involves creating a detailed visual representation of the design. Designers use software like Adobe Illustrator to create digital renderings of their designs, including colour, texture, and other details.
- The fourth stage is 3D modelling, where designers create a virtual model of the jewellery using specialised software. This stage allows designers to see the design from different angles and make any necessary adjustments before the final production.
- The final stage is prototyping, where a physical design model is created. This stage allows designers to test the design and make necessary changes before the final product once the design is finalised and sent to the production team for manufacturing.

The new design needs to go through the fabrication process, and selecting suitable materials, such as precious metals, is an essential matter at this stage (Ba'ai, N. M., Hashim, H. Z., Aris, A., & Anwar, R. (2015). In this scenario, the design requires several levels of specific modifications, such as the size of the appropriate design shape and composition of the motif and gemstone placement (see sets 1 and 2 in Fig. 6).

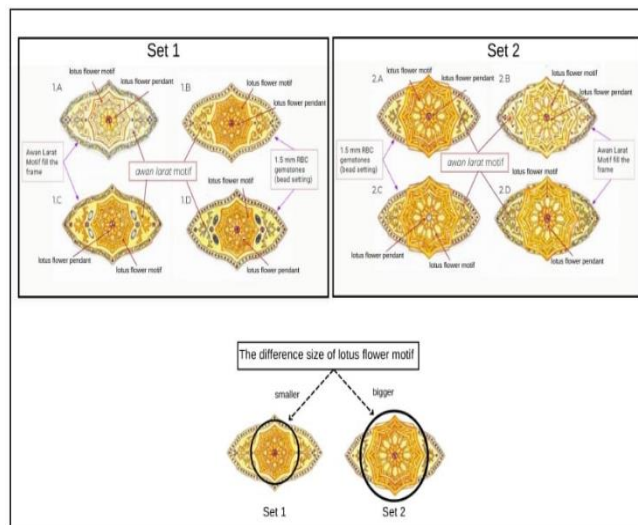
Generally, the jewellery design process involves several stages, from ideation to final production, and requires creativity and technical skills. It is a complex process that requires attention to detail and an understanding of the materials and manufacturing techniques used in jewellery production.

Fig. 5 The process of form finding.



Source: Nur Siti Khadijah Zullkifle (2021)

Fig. 6 Design process: Composition of the motif and gemstone placement



Source: Nur Siti Khadijah Zullkifle (2021)

## FINDING

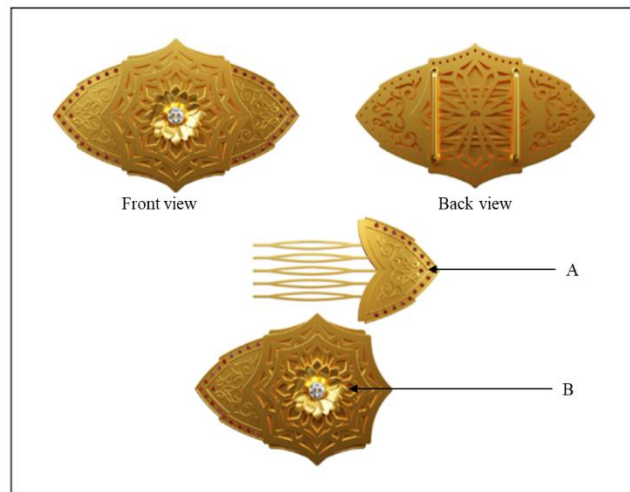
This study elucidates the function of *Pending* as a piece of traditional Malay jewellery and how its design can be improved through the creative and exploratory ideation process. The study has demonstrated how designers can work within the constraints of the original form, additional elements, and cultural significance to produce innovative and meaningful jewellery designs. The research has also highlighted how traditional Malay jewellery can be reintroduced and adapted to meet contemporary trends and needs by incorporating modern manufacturing techniques.

One of the main findings of the research is the multifunctional nature of *Pending* jewellery, as demonstrated by the example of the hair comb and magnetic pendant in Figure 6. This design incorporates traditional motifs and elements and provides practical functions for the wearer. The use of magnets as a primary

technique in the pendant design is a creative solution that enhances the usability and versatility of the jewellery piece.

This research has contributed to developing new concepts, methods, and innovative ideas in Malay traditional jewellery design. By understanding traditional designs' constraints and cultural significance, designers can create unique and meaningful jewellery pieces that reflect modern consumers' evolving needs and tastes while preserving the heritage and tradition of Malay jewellery.

Fig. 7 Pending as Fashion Accessories (A: Hair Comb, B: Magnetic Pendant)



Source: Nur Siti Khadijah Zullkifle (2021)

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the significance of Pending, a traditional Malay jewellery piece commonly used to complement Malay clothing during special events and gatherings. While it is no longer as famous as it once was, this study proposes enhancing and innovating its existing functions to resurrect it into a modern multifunctional buckle as a fashion accessory in Malaysia. The study employs qualitative research methods, such as observation and descriptive analysis, utilising a formal analysis approach. By preserving Malaysia's cultural heritage, this research can serve as a valuable reference point for academics, designers, goldsmiths, historians, and other related professionals in the field of art, culture, and traditional jewellery. Overall, this study provides an opportunity to revive and modernise traditional Malay jewellery, allowing it to continue to be appreciated and utilised by future generations.

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